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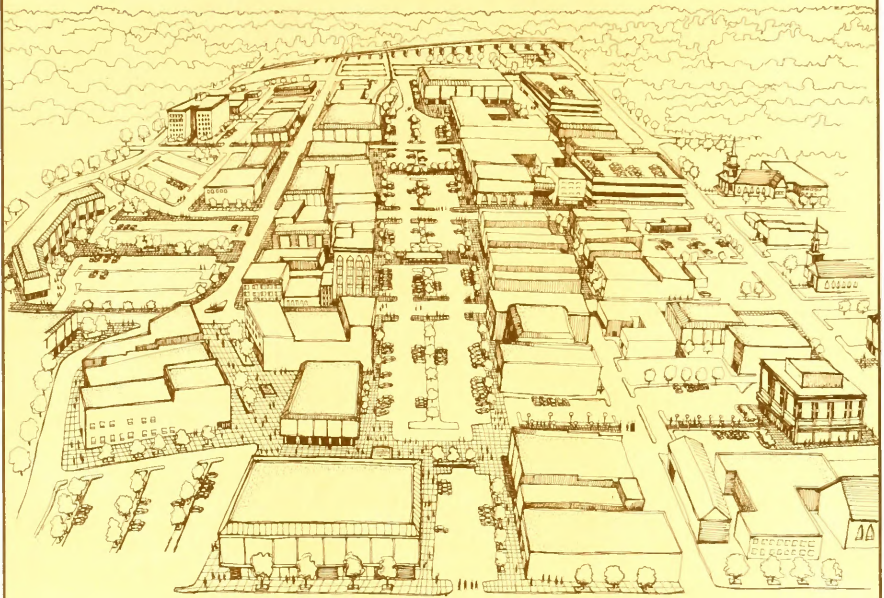
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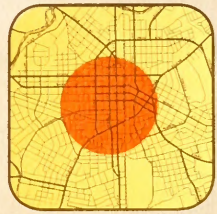
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# A PROPOSAL FOR PROGRESS

# DOWNTOWN ROCKY MOUNT





A PROPOSAL FOR PROGRESS IS THE RESULT OF A STUDY UNDERTAKEN BY THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT, THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT, DIVISION OF COMMUNITY PLANNING. THE STUDY CONCENTRATED ON THE DOWNTOWN AREA, THE HEART OF THE CITY. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY WAS TO ASSAY THE POTENTIALS OF THE AREA, TO IDENTIFY THE PROBLEMS WHICH BESET THE DOWNTOWN, AND TO SUGGEST WAYS IN WHICH THE PROBLEMS CAN BE OVERCOME AND THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE AREA ACHIEVED. A SKETCH PLAN WAS DEVELOPED TO ILLUSTRATE HOW THE AREA COULD EVOLVE TO ACCOMMODATE FUTURE NEEDS AND CHANGES.

THE BROCHURE SUMMARIZES THE PROPOSALS FOR RENEWING THE VITALITY OF THE CITY'S DOWNTOWN. AVAILABLE AT THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT IN THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING ARE REPORTS WHICH INCLUDE IN DETAIL THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY.

## THE REGION

Rocky Mount is one of the several cities of roughly equal size which serve as trade, manufacturing, governmental and population concentrations in the Coastal Plain Region of North Carolina. In the southern portion of the region Fayetteville and Wilmington dominate, while in the northern portion five cities, Rocky Mount, Wilson, Goldsboro, Kinston and Greenville vie for dominance in an area largely rural in nature. In 1960 less than one-third of the population of the region was classified as urban. Not only is the Coastal Plain area rural, but many counties have either stable or declining population.

The Coastal Plain has experienced heavy out-migration of its people during the past several decades. The counties which have gained population have done so only by a high birth rate.

A survey of economic statistics indicates that the Coastal Plain, with forty percent of the population of the State accounted for only 33.8 percent of the total employed persons, 27.4 percent of the State's manufacturing plants, and 36.7 of total retail sales. The region has 71.4 of all tenant farms and produces 63.7 of the total value of all farm products produced in the State, and yet accounted for almost half, 47.9 percent, of all families with annual incomes of less than \$3,000 in 1960.

In summary, the regional area in which Rocky Mount is located is an area lagging behind the State and National economic growth averages. Economic opportunities are luring many of the people, especially rural families, away from the Coastal Plain. However, the larger cities within the Coastal Plain should continue to increase in population.

## THE CITY

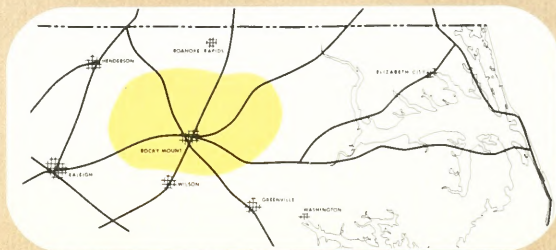
The rural to urban movement is reflected in the growth of the Rocky Mount immediate area. Several large manufacturing firms have located in Rocky Mount within the past five years. Based on a dwelling unit count, the population of the Rocky Mount Planning Areas increased from 40,853 in January, 1964 to 42,142 in January, 1967. A population of approximately 37,000 is estimated within the corporate limits, up from 32,147 in 1960, although annexation accounted for a portion of this increase.

The population of the City and its immediately surrounding area is projected to reach 50,000 before 1975, and 75,000 before 1995. During the next 30 years the City's population gain will equal that of its first 100 years.

Considering the relatively depressed economy of the Coastal Plain, it is encouraging that Rocky Mount's retail sales increased 35 percent between 1963 and 1966, but the significance is that Rocky Mount's rank of 12th among retail centers of the State has been maintained. Further, Rocky Mount actually increased slightly its percentage of total retail sales within the State - from 1.20 percent for the year 1963 to 1.25 percent in 1966. In June 1967, Rocky Mount accounted for 1.28 percent of the State total.

Because of its lead in population, the largest of the cities east of Raleigh and north of Wilmington there is no reason that Rocky Mount cannot continue as the dominant retail center for this area if the city can continue to offer the range of goods and services desired by the shoppers in the area.

RETAIL  
TRADE  
AREA



## THE DOWNTOWN TODAY

Although the basic layout of streets in the downtown is substantially the same as fifty years ago, the downtown area itself is constantly changing. Much of this change is for the better — new buildings, improved streets, new businesses; but the evidence of change is also found in vacant stores, dilapidated buildings and increased conflict between the ever growing numbers of automobiles.

One of the long term trends evident is the gradual shift of more primary retail stores to the Nash side of the railroad tracks. Washington Street, once a bustling center of commerce, has suffered markedly from this trend. Even the stores along East Main Street are showing the effects of the shift.

The railroad is the single most divisive element in the downtown. While the salutary influence of the railroad on the City's post economic growth is recognized, the continued conflict between the railroad and the functioning of the downtown area is increasing, to the detriment of the City.

The presence of the railroad along Main Street is a contributing factor to the decline of the area east of Main Street. The viability of the entire downtown depends on its ability to attract large numbers of people, and to provide efficient and pleasant accommodations for these visitors.

Compact retail areas with short walking distances attract shoppers. However, the primary retail area of Rocky Mount has become a strip along Main Street. Sears is one of the few major stores located more than two hundred feet from Main Street. Many of the stores which front on Main Street have also

opened entrances off Howard Street, although Howard Street itself is congested with cars, service vehicles and a jumble of utility poles and overhead wires.

## CIRCULATION AND PARKING

Poor traffic circulation in the downtown discourages its use by potential shoppers. Three major problems are present in the downtown area:

Through traffic. Traffic passing through the downtown shares the same streets as traffic circulating in the downtown itself. U. S. 64 and U. S. 301 Business channel many motorists into the downtown who wish only to pass through. The railroad. The presence of the railroad frequently blocks east — west traffic on the four streets which join the Nash and Edgecombe sides of the downtown.

Intersections which confuse the motorists. The seven — way intersection of Main, Thomas and Washington streets, and the five — way intersection of Tarboro, Washington and Albemarle are particularly bad. The existing Land Use Map shows other examples of street jogs and angles which hinder safe and efficient traffic movement.

Parking has become a critical problem in the downtown area. The parking study revealed almost 100 percent usage of parking facilities along the block on West Main Street and in some off-street parking lots in the blocks immediately west of Main Street. Parking facilities located several blocks from the main concentration of shops are necessary for employee parking, but they will not attract the motorists who wish to shop or transact business on Main Street.

## FUTURE SPACE REQUIREMENTS

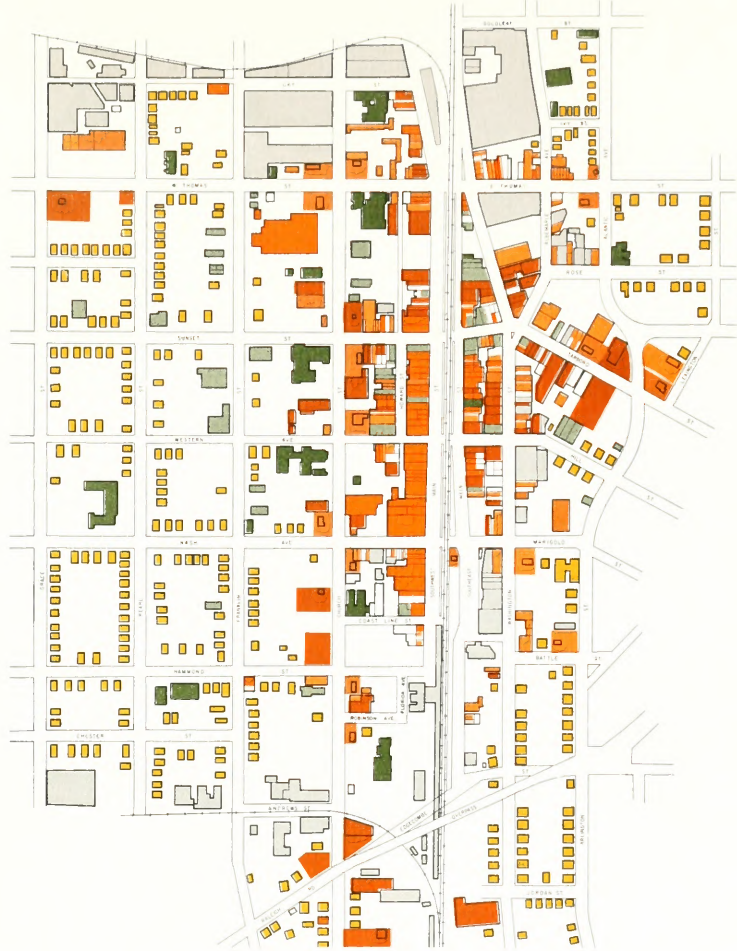
Space requirements were projected to provide for a downtown to serve a 1985 Rocky Mount urban area of 75,000 population. Existing and future floor space requirements (in square feet) are given below.

	Primary Commercial	Secondary Commercial	Service and Repair Space	Total
Existing	234,788	411,642	272,250	918,680
Future	653,400	304,920	435,600	1,393,920

Parking facilities to overcome present deficiencies and accommodate anticipated 1985 demands are shown below.









	All-Day	Transient	Total
Existing Spaces	571	856	1427
Future Space Demands	1565	3037	4602*

\*Plus 500 spaces for Convention Center.



EXISTING  
LAND  
USE

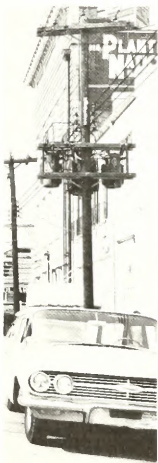
LEGEND

- |   |   |   |                             |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
|  | RESIDENTIAL                                     |  | SECONDARY RETAIL            |
|  | SOCIAL AND CULTURAL                             |  | CONVENIENCE RETAIL          |
|  | ADMINISTRATIVE, FINANCIAL AND ADVISORY SERVICES |  | CONSUMER AND REPAIR SERVICE |
|  | PRIMARY RETAIL                                  |  | WHOLESALE AND INDUSTRIAL    |

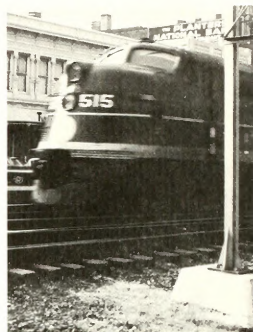
## PROBLEMS IN THE



POOR APPEARANCE



TRAFFIC CONGESTION



RAILROAD TRACKS



## GOALS FOR IMPROVING

TO DEVELOP A DYNAMIC DOWNTOWN WHICH WILL CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN ROCKY MOUNT AS THE DOMINANT RETAIL COMMERCIAL CENTER OF THE NORTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA REGION.

TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL BUILDING SPACE FOR FUTURE EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT WHILE PLANNING FOR A MORE COMPACT, DENSELY DEVELOPED DOWNTOWN, SCALED FOR THE PEDESTRIAN.

TO REVERSE THE DOWNHILL TREND OF THE COMMERCIAL AREA EAST OF MAIN STREET AND TO UPGRADE THE FRINGE AREAS AROUND THE DOWNTOWN FOR OFFICES, SERVICE BUSINESSES AND HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL.

## DOWNTOWN AREA



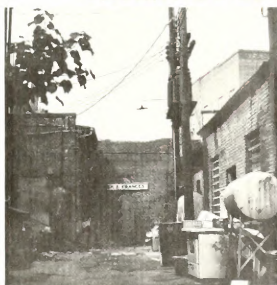
INADEQUATE PARKING



OVERHEAD WIRING



VACANT BUILDINGS AND DEAD END ALLEYS

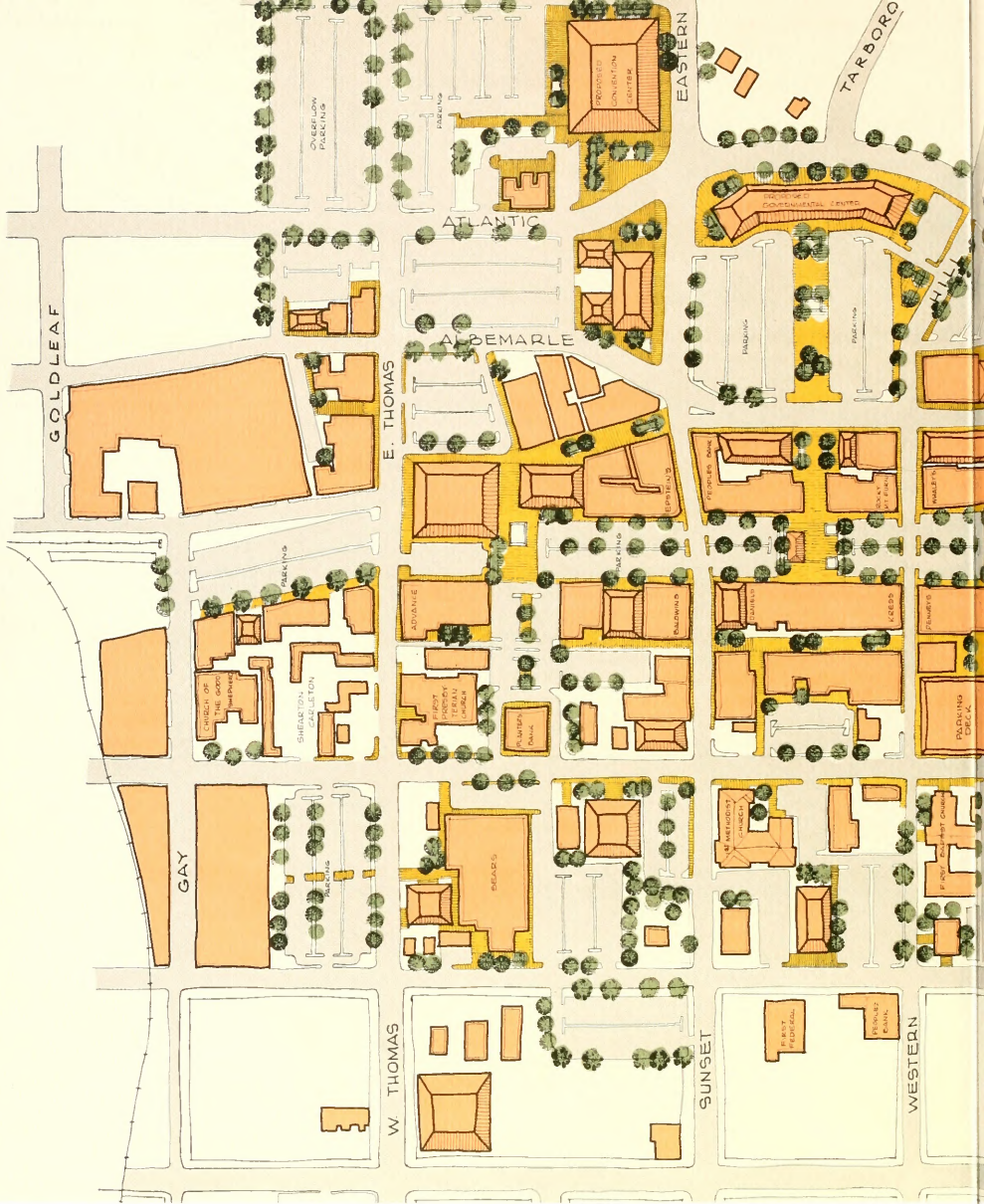


## DOWNTOWN ROCKY MOUNT

TO DESIGN A WALKWAY SYSTEM WHICH WILL ALLOW PEDESTRIANS TO MOVE FROM PARKING TO SHOPPING FACILITY AND TO CIRCULATE WITHIN THE DOWNTOWN WITH A MINIMUM OF CONFLICTS WITH VEHICULAR TRAFFIC.





TO CREATE A MODERN CIRCULATION SYSTEM FOR THE AUTOMOBILE WITHIN THE DOWNTOWN AREA, WITH AMPLE PARKING FACILITIES LOCATED CONVENIENT TO THE SHOPPER'S AND VISITOR'S DESTINATION.

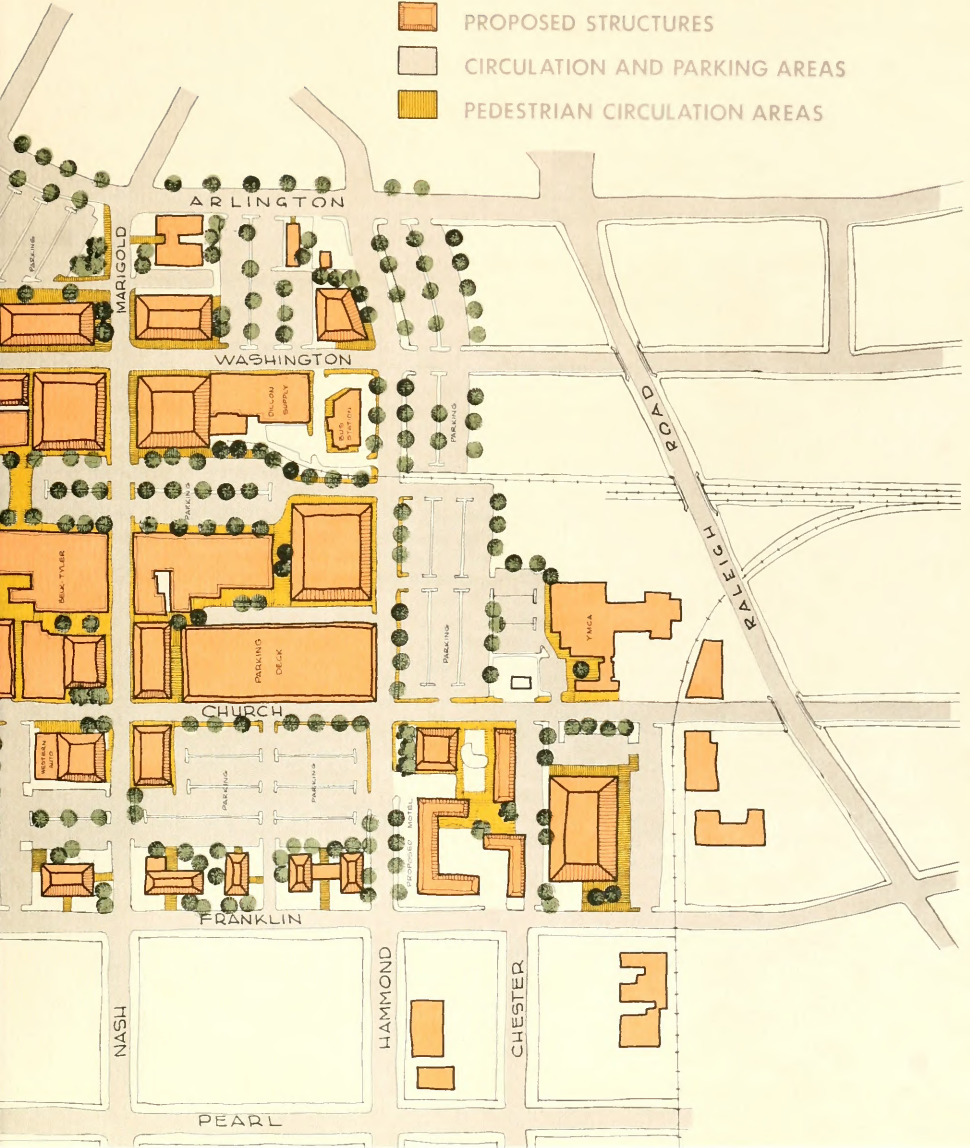
TO CREATE A DOWNTOWN IN WHICH THE CITIZENS OF ROCKY MOUNT AND VISITORS WILL FIND A DISTINCTIVE AND ATTRACTIVE DISTRICT FOR SHOPPING, TRANSACTING BUSINESS AND ENJOYING COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES.



# A PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN



-  EXISTING STRUCTURES TO REMAIN
-  PROPOSED STRUCTURES
-  CIRCULATION AND PARKING AREAS
-  PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION AREAS



# ROCKY MOUNT



# FEATURES OF THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

## RAILROAD RELOCATION

The most dramatic change proposed in the plan is the removal of the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad along Main Street from Thomas Street to Hammond Street. The main railroad tracks would be re-routed around the City. The connection to the Spring Hope Branch would remain on the south. A new spur connection would maintain present rail access to all property north of Thomas Street. Officials of the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad have reviewed the proposal and given tentative approval of the relocation route.

The removal of the tracks would be an enormous benefit to the entire city as well as the downtown. Traffic problems of Main Street would be greatly relieved. The rejuvenation of the commercial area east of Main Street becomes a real possibility. The right-of-way of the railroad would greatly increase parking on Main Street, making possible landscaped parking lots in the very heart of the retail area. The railroad tracks are presently a blighting element in the appearance of the downtown and their removal will greatly enhance the area.

## COMMERCIAL EXPANSION

Growth of commercial activity will stimulate a need for new commercial space and also for other types of uses in the downtown - office, cultural, recreation, and services. Several major commercial structures are proposed that will front on Main Street. Suggested locations at Thomas and Hammond will serve to anchor the north and south boundaries of the downtown. New locations on the east side of Main Street will reinforce a compact primary retail center.

## PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS

The pedestrian will find spacious and attractive walkway systems connecting parking facilities with the shops, offices and other facilities of the downtown. Howard Street and the alleyways in the block immediately west of Main Street are proposed to be developed into a pedestrian mall extending from Hammond Street northward to the parking lot of Planters National Bank. These walkways will connect parking facilities directly to store entrances. Pedestrian crosswalks afford safe access from one side of Main Street to the other. A centrally located plaza provides space for outdoor exhibits and shows, and also serves as a pleasant rest area for shoppers and visitors. A mall or arcade connects the plaza with the parking facilities on Washington Street.

## MUNICIPAL BUILDING

A site bounded by Washington, Hill and Arlington Streets and the new Eastern Avenue extension is proposed as the location for a future Municipal Building. Parking facilities to serve both the offices and other downtown parking needs would be located between the new structure and Washington Street.

## CITY AUDITORIUM-CONVENTION CENTER

The proposed City Auditorium-Convention Center will provide facilities for community programs and also enable Rocky Mount to accommodate large conventions. The proposed site would be convenient to the downtown area's shops, restaurants and motels, and the new street alignments will provide adequate vehicular access. Parking facilities for the center would be located north of the proposed site between Eastern Avenue and Thomas Street.



## CIRCULATION

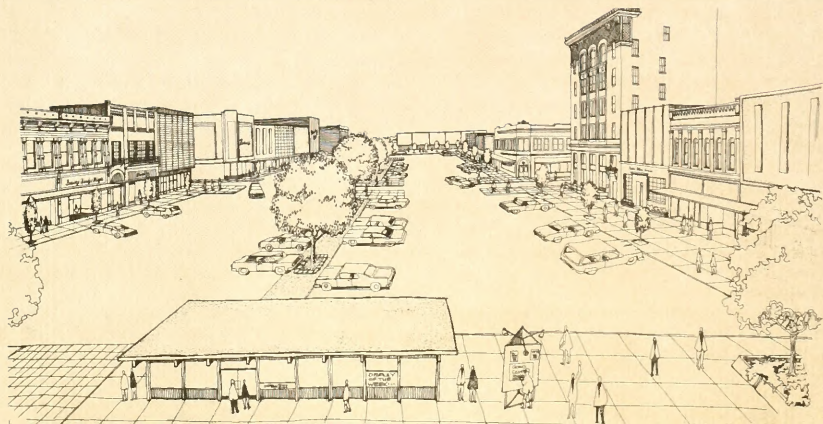
With the removal of the tracks and trains in the downtown, traffic circulation can be greatly improved. The circulation system proposed utilizes existing street layout with a few major changes. Taboro Street would terminate at Arlington Street instead of connecting with Sunset. Eastern Avenue is proposed to be extended to connect with Sunset at Washington Street. This change will improve the east-west flow of traffic through the northern section of the downtown.

Hommond Street is proposed to be extended to connect with Bottle Street to give an additional cross street at the southern edge of the downtown.

Main Street, freed of its tracks and trains, can be developed to serve the Main Street businesses more effectively. North - South traffic is removed, and replaced by landscaped parking lots with access from the east-west streets. This arrangement will reduce the confusion and conflict of automobile and pedestrian, and encourage the full development of both sides of main street. North - South vehicular movement will continue to be served by Franklin and Church Streets on the west, and by Washington-Albemarle and Arlington-Atlantic on the eastern side of the downtown.

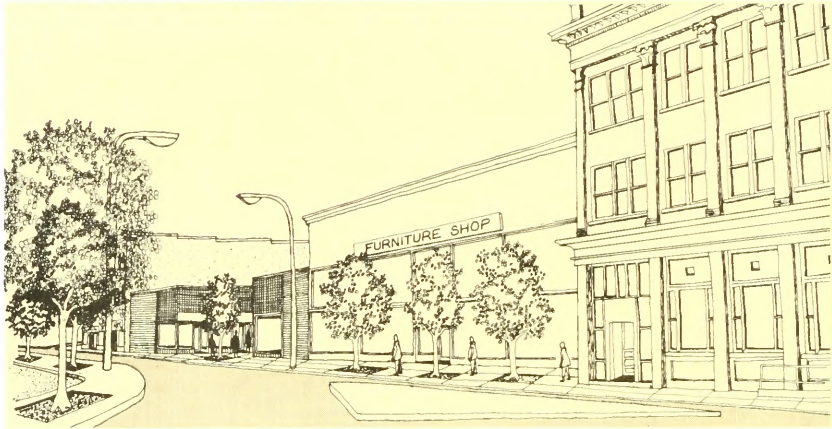
## PARKING FACILITIES

Landscaped parking lots on Main Street will provide short-term parking spaces for shoppers in the heart of the downtown. In addition, two parking decks are proposed for future development along Church Street. These parking decks will adjoin the pedestrian walkway system to provide easy access to the major stores in the downtown. Large parking lots are proposed between Washington and Arlington Streets and along Church, Hammond and Thomas Streets. These lots will serve shoppers, visitors, businessmen and employees with all-day parking facilities.

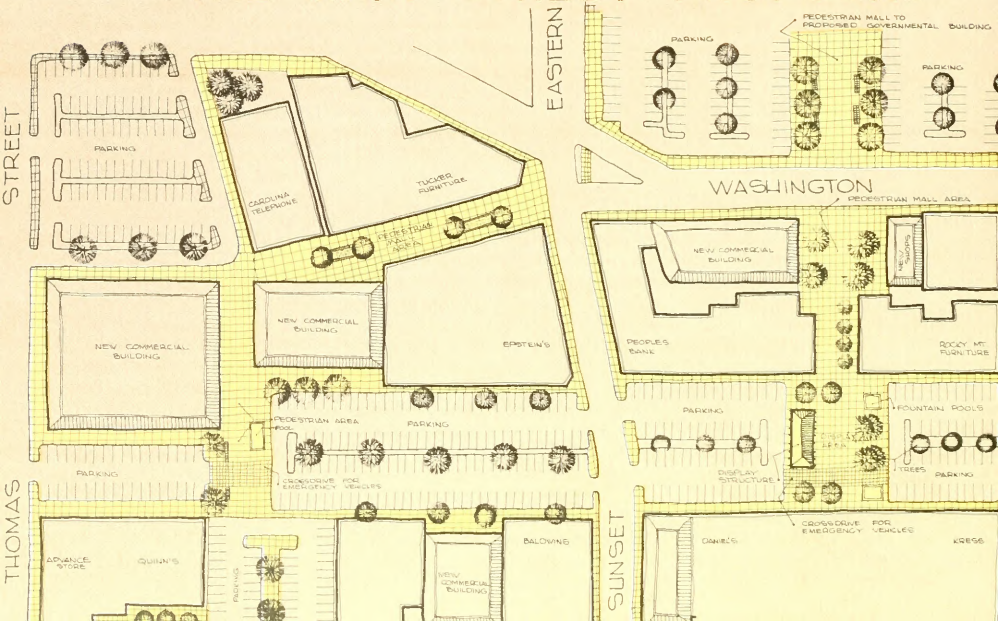




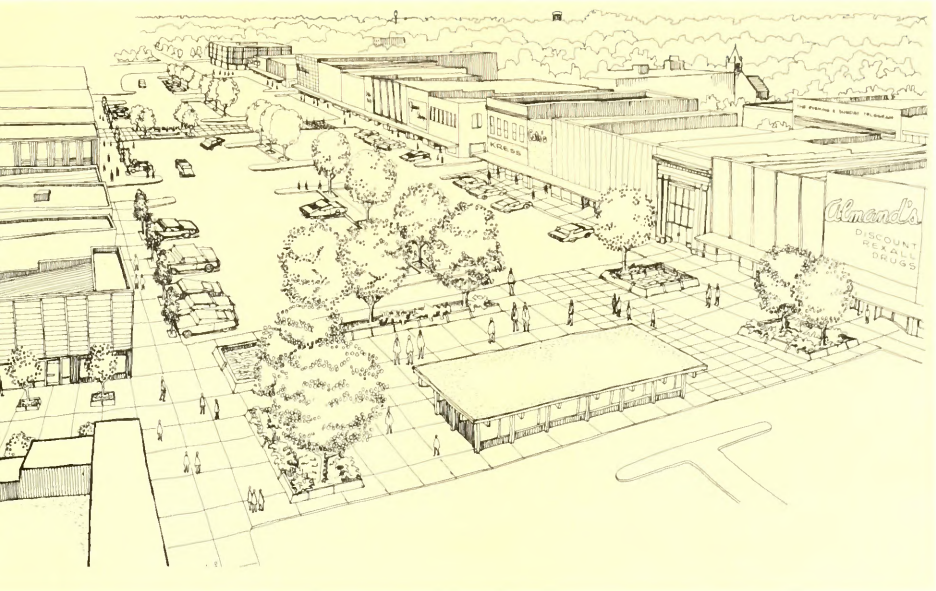
WASHINGTON STREET



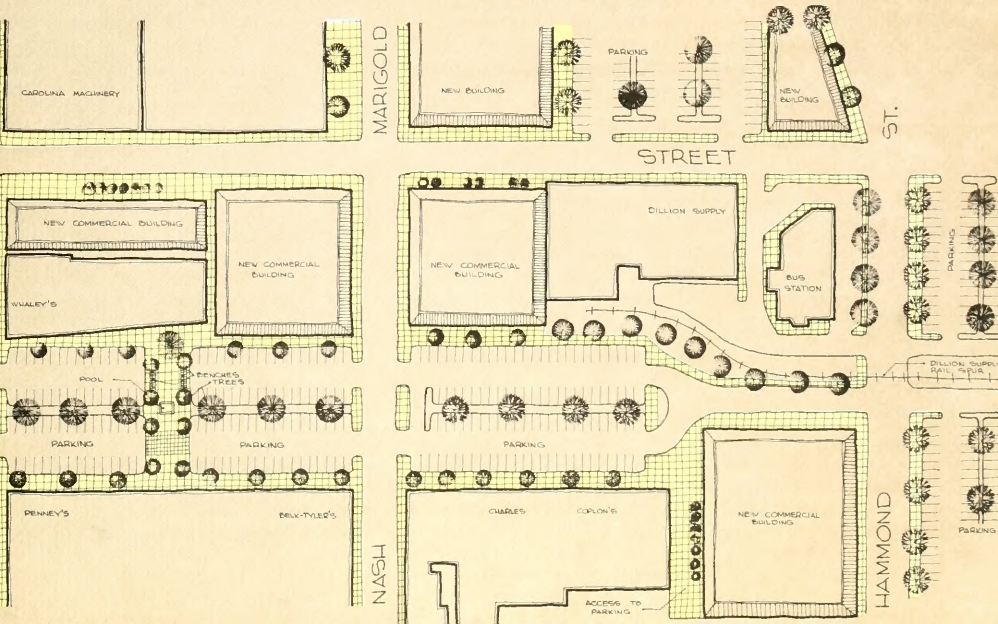
# THE MAIN STREET PROPOSAL



# SOUTH MAIN STREET

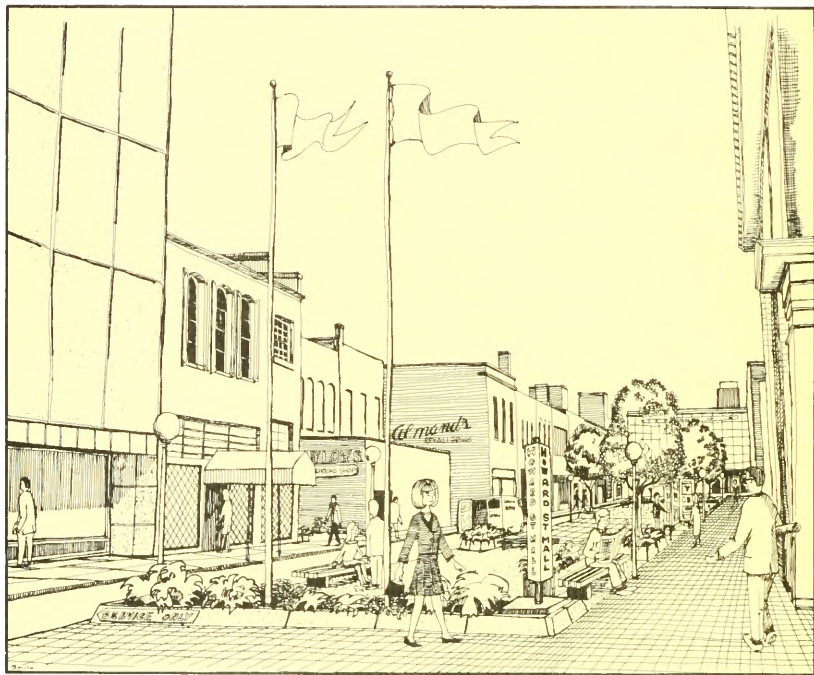


# WASHINGTON STREET PROPOSAL

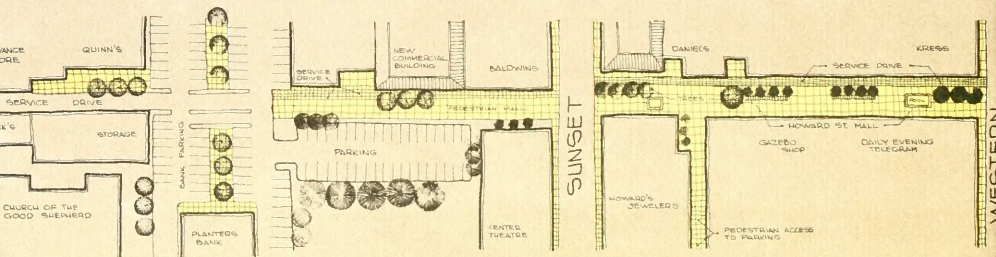




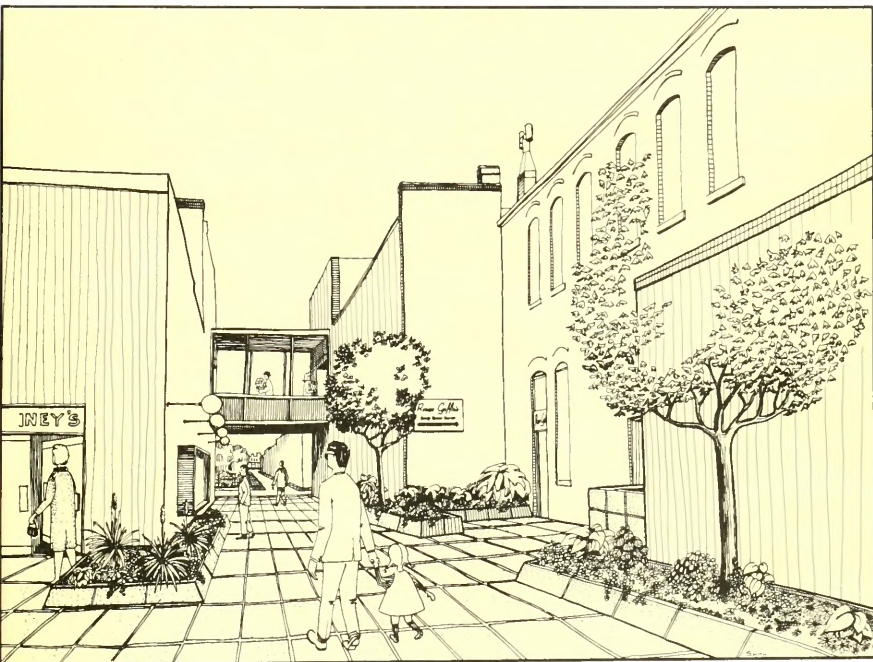
HOWARD STREET MALL  
SOUTH FROM SUNSET



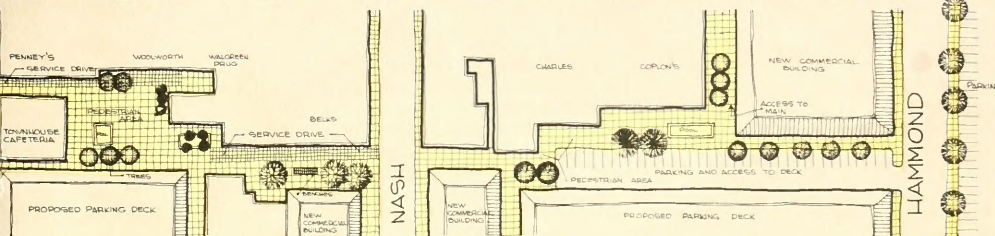
## DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR HOWARD



PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS BETWEEN  
WESTERN AND NASH STREETS

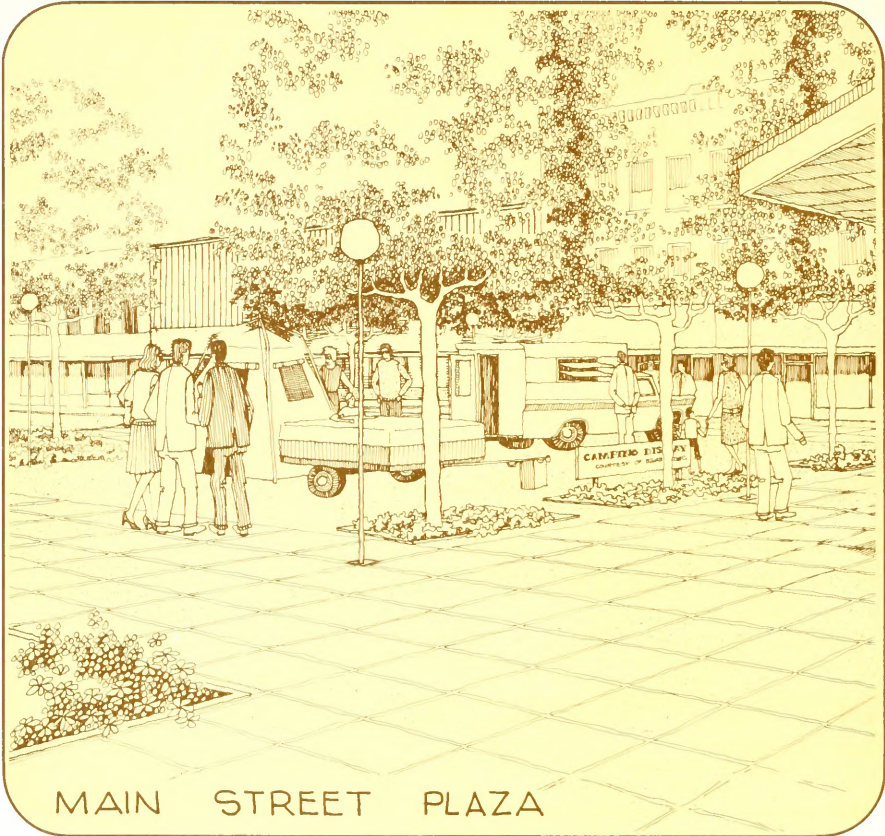


STREET AND CONNECTING ALLEYWAYS





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## MAIN STREET PLAZA

The preparation of this report was financed in part through an urban planning grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the provision of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended.

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City Manager

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\*Members of Joint Subcommittee

Technical Assistance by the Division of Community Planning,  
North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development.